



# State Senator Jackie Speier District Update



8<sup>th</sup> Senate District

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### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Sen. Speier will host townhall meetings about new and pending laws:

**Sept. 16: 12:30 pm – 2 pm, Burlingame,**  
Burlingame High School, 1 Mangini Way

**Oct. 14: 9 am - 10:30 am, Portola Valley,** Little Schoolhouse 765 Portola Rd;  
**San Francisco, 12 pm–1:30 pm,** Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy, 4235 19<sup>th</sup> St.

**Oct. 21: 9:30 am – 11 am, Pacifica,** City Council Chambers, 2212 Beach Blvd.;  
**12 pm - 1:30pm, Half Moon Bay,** Ted Adcock Community/Senior Center, 535 Kelly Ave.

**Oct. 28: 12:30 pm – 2 pm, San Mateo,**  
Aragon High School Library,  
900 Alamedas de las Pulgas

**Nov 4: 9 am - 10:30 am, Daly City,**  
City Hall Chambers, 333 90<sup>th</sup> St.;  
**12 pm - 1:30 pm, South San Francisco,**  
Municipal Services Building, City Council Chambers, 33 Arroyo Dr.

For information, call (650) 340 – 8840 or visit [www.senate.ca.gov/speier](http://www.senate.ca.gov/speier)

## September 2006

### Message from Sen. Speier

For the past two years, I've spent much of my time trying to bring the California prison system back under control. Every family with dreams of sending their children to college should be concerned about the \$8.9 billion (and escalating) costs of this dysfunctional system. Prison expenses compete for state funding directly against higher education, and to some extent even the K-12 system.

The following is what we need to do in the short-run to right the wrongs of the California prison system. I've authored legislation to get each of these accomplished:

- Send undocumented immigrant criminals to prisons out of state to relieve overcrowding in California's prisons and to reduce costs. (SB2X 5)
- Reform the parole system—like Florida has done—to reduce the crimes committed by parolees (particularly in the communities in which they live) and to significantly reduce costs. This can be accomplished simply by requiring that high-risk sex offenders wear a GPS anklet or bracelet that allows them to be monitored 24 hours per day.

We could probably save \$1 billion per year within a few years simply by adopting the Florida reforms. My bill last year, SB 619, authorized the use of GPS surveillance of parolees and probationers. I followed up this year with SB 1178, which mandates the use of GPS on all high-risk sex offenders.

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Move women convicted of non-violent offenses to community facilities where the costs of care are lower and where rehabilitation programs exist and work well. (SB2X 6)

Here's what we need to do in the long-run: Replace failed prison leadership with visionaries. Other states have done it. For California, it's critical.

Prisons are essential, but they must also be managed extremely well or they will eventually consume every available tax dollar. I hope that you will let your elected officials know that prison reform is high on your list of "things to do" in 2007. Let them know that you want both public safety and college educations for California's children. We can continue to have both--if we reform California's failing and dysfunction prison system.

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## Food Labeling & Safety

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Senator Speier authored two bills during the 2005 – 2006 legislative session:

### Organic Fish or Organic Fraud?

SB 730 prohibits labeling or marketing all seafood products sold in California as "organic" until federal or state standards defining the term are established. Concerns over labeling seafood as "organic" arose when farmed fish were discovered to contain high levels of toxics and pollutants, yet were carrying organic labels in grocery stores and seafood outlets. The bill is part of a broader effort to protect public health by protecting the integrity of the organic label by ensuring that labels remain accurate sources of information for those concerned about food safety and personal health. As a result of this bill, the federal government has accelerated its efforts to define a standard for organic seafoods. The bill was signed by the Governor in October of 2005.

### Safe Meat & Poultry

Under a secretive 2002 agreement with the federal government, California's state and local health officials are not allowed to tell consumers if they have eaten recalled meat or poultry contaminated with E. coli, Listeria, Mad Cow Disease, salmonella and other bacteria or contaminants. In fact, under the same secret agreement, if California were to get a vast shipment of infected meat or poultry tomorrow, the state is likely to face a widespread systems failure.

SB 611, sponsored by the Health Officers Association of California, creates a three-part notification process:

- It bypasses USDA involvement by requiring meat and poultry distributors and suppliers to directly notify DHS of all locations which have received tainted meat and poultry, subject to a USDA recall;
- It allows DHS to inform local and environmental health officers of locations receiving recalled beef and poultry when they consider it necessary to protect public health; and
- It requires DHS and local health officers to notify the public of these specific locations once the existence of contaminated product has been confirmed.

The weaknesses of our recall system were highlighted during California's Mad Cow recall in 2004, when local health officials were not only told belatedly of locations receiving contaminated meat, but also strictly prohibited from sharing with the public names of stores and restaurants where recalled meat was sent. In many instances, the meat had already been consumed.

As noted in my statements before the Legislature, if the state fails to act and California continues to wait for the federal government to reform our weak meat recall system, Californians will remain vulnerable to intentional or accidental poisoning of meat and poultry. Given concerns about potential agro-terrorism threats, we need tools in place to protect Californians against potential illness, death and economic damage. Currently SB 611 is on the Governor's desk, awaiting action. He has until September 30 to sign or veto legislation.

## **Ordinary Chemicals + Criminal Intent = Methamphetamine**

"Speed kills." It's the anti-methamphetamine message that many of us remember from the 1960s, after which the meth problem in California receded from the public's eye. Today meth is back with a vengeance - metastasizing into an epidemic that can no longer be ignored.

A growing proportion of men arrested and jailed test positive for methamphetamine. The drug drives the transmission of HIV/AIDS, particularly in urban areas including San Francisco. Meth fuels identity theft, with wired-awake fraudsters hunched over tables for hours reconstructing shredded financial documents or laminating fake IDs. The rate of addiction to meth in California has grown to the point that more people register with drug treatment centers for meth abuse than they do for any other drug, including - remarkably - alcohol.

Perhaps the most pernicious aspect of meth is its ease of production. It can be made by anyone who has some basic chemicals, rudimentary apparatus, and a

connection to the Internet, where recipes for the drug abound. Houses, hotel rooms, even the trunks of cars - these are all potential meth labs in any part of California. The toxins that go into making the drug soak into carpet and drapes, filter through the air as vapors, stain bath tubs and collect in outdoor dump sites long enough to seep into the groundwater. The noxious byproducts of meth manufacturing damage the environment and innocent people exposed to them. Approximately 15 percent of illegal meth labs are found due to meth "cookers" making mistakes that result in fire, explosion, or injury.

This year I authored SB 1299 in response. The bill passed the Legislature with strong support and I expect the Governor to sign it. SB 1299 would make it a crime to possess methamphetamine precursor chemicals - the everyday products like Sudafed needed to make meth - with the intent to sell them to someone who's going to use them to manufacture the drug. The days of "hear no evil, see no evil" for chemical middlemen are about to end.

## **Update: Bucolic Montana can teach us a thing or two about fighting meth**

There are nearly as many people in my State Senate district (850,000) as there are in the entire state of Montana (917,000), our fourth-largest state in terms of square miles. But in "Big Sky Country" has serious lessons that can be learned by urbanized California, chief among them: how to fight meth abuse.

Today, the Montana Meth Project has raised eyebrows with its no-holds-barred approach to meth prevention. You can drive through many small communities and be shocked to see billboards of persons grotesquely disfigured by methamphetamine use with slogans such as "No, using methamphetamine doesn't make you attractive to women." On the sides of barns and public buildings you'll see slogans like, "Fairfield -- fighting methamphetamine!"

This year, I introduced SB 1500, which would set up an account in the state Treasury to accept private funds for an anti-meth campaign—California style. We owe it to the kids of California to fight methamphetamine abuse and production with every tool that we have in our arsenal, and we can learn some great lessons from great Americans in rural America: Speak out about meth abuse.

## **Useful State Websites**

Department of Insurance ([www.insurance.ca.gov](http://www.insurance.ca.gov)) – Learn about complaint histories of insurance carriers, file complaints, learn about available carriers for different type of insurance (i.e. homeowners), and other useful tips.

Department of Managed Health Care ([www.dmhc.ca.gov](http://www.dmhc.ca.gov)) – Useful information about California HMOs; the toll-free line is 1-888-HMO-2219.

Employment Development Department ([www.edd.ca.gov](http://www.edd.ca.gov))

Bureau of Automotive Repair ([www.smogcheck.ca.gov/stdhome.asp](http://www.smogcheck.ca.gov/stdhome.asp)) – Use this site to file complaints about shoddy automotive body repairs and look up the repair history of your current vehicle or one you may be considering purchasing

Highway Patrol ([www.chp.ca.gov](http://www.chp.ca.gov))

Student Aid Commission ([www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org))

California Lottery ([www.calottery.com](http://www.calottery.com))

State Telephone Directory ([www.cold.ca.gov](http://www.cold.ca.gov))

## A Decade of Progress on Auto Insurance

The chart below says it all: Eight years after California first began demanding proof of automobile insurance during car registration renewals, the percentage of accidents involving uninsured cars continues to drop. Average expenditures for uninsured motorist coverage also plummeted.

In 1996, I fought the insurance industry over my legislation to require motorists to provide proof of auto insurance when renewing registrations. I won, as did all law-abiding motorists who had paid the price for uninsured vehicles for far too long.

The following year, the percentage of accidents involving an uninsured car was cut from 25 percent to 18 percent. Since then it has drifted down to its current level of about 13 percent. One study I ordered from the State's databases showed that taxpayers also won big. Billings to the Medi-Cal program and to counties for auto-related hospital care fell sharply, going from \$300 million per year before the law took effect to \$150 million per year two years later (1998).

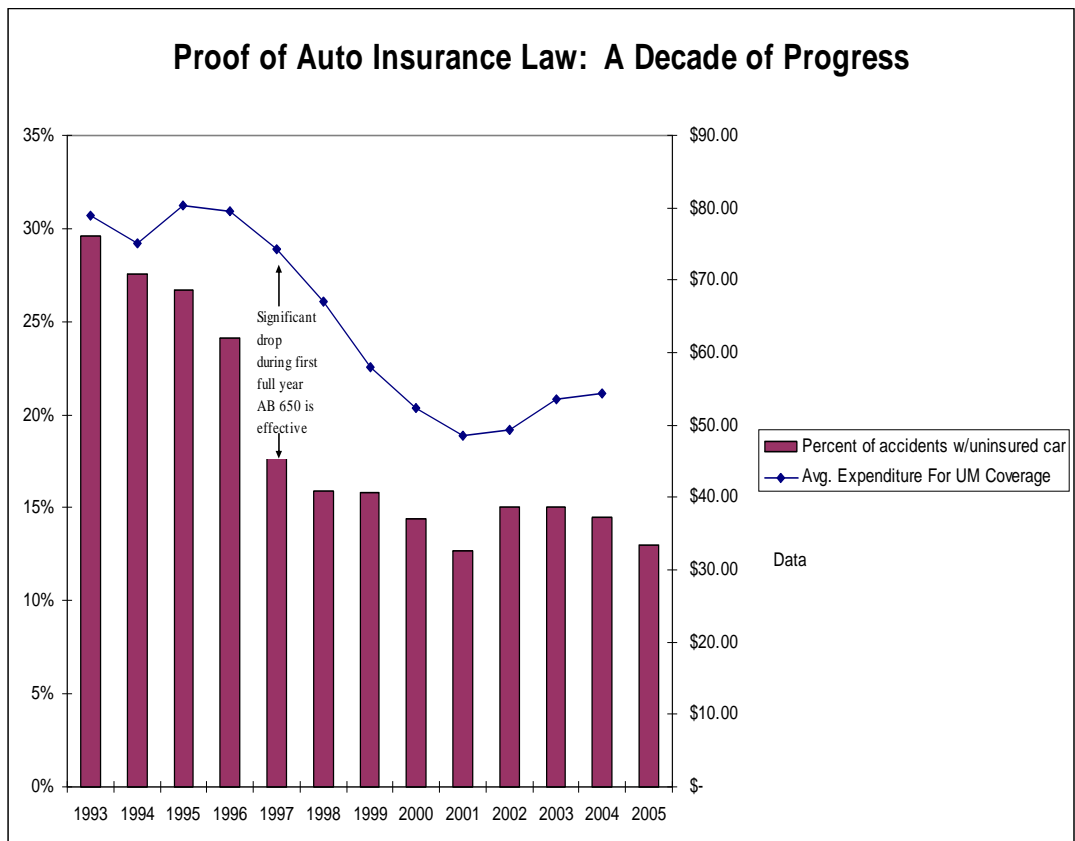
Now, we're about to do it again.

Earlier this year, police departments throughout California began accessing DMV's insurance database. Now, traffic officers are more likely to write tickets for lack of insurance when also checking for registration during a traffic stop.

Later this year, the DMV will begin suspending a car's registration when insurance lapses or is cancelled. No longer will people be able to easily game the system by buying insurance for a few months and then

canceling, basically betting that they won't cause death or injury to others until registration renewal time. I expect that we'll quickly see the benefits of enhanced enforcement, and that within a few years the percentage of accidents involving an uninsured car will be reduced to approximately 8 percent. It's not perfect, but California has shown great progress since the 1990s.

Uninsured accidents cause more than just financial devastation—they extract an emotional toll on families already trying to deal with the grief of serious injury or loss. Through steps taken over the past decade, we're improving the likelihood that law-abiding motorists (the vast majority) will be reimbursed when someone else causes serious injury or death. In the end, enforcing our mandatory auto insurance system is part of the bargain that ultimately makes all of us a bit more secure as we go about our daily lives.



## **More Child Safety**

The Legislature has passed and sent to the Governor AB 2108 (Evans), a bill that will increase the mandatory time that children must ride in automobile child safety seats to eight years old or 4 feet, 9 inches, whichever comes first. AB 2108 builds on a law that I authored in the 1990s that requires children to ride in safety seats until 6 years of age or 60 pounds. According to Safety Belt USA, children who use car or booster seats instead of seat belts alone are 59 percent less likely to be injured in a crash. Motor vehicle crashes cause about one of every three injury deaths among children 12 and younger. Among those between the ages of five and 12, crash injuries are the leading cause of death.

## **Baby Bullet Update: Caltrain ridership greatest since World War II**



June 30, 2006 marked a milestone for Caltrain. Ridership along the three-county right of way hit 10.1 million annually, the greatest number since World War II. The reason: Baby Bullet, improved service, and skyrocketing gasoline prices. As of June 2006, average weekday ridership was up 25 percent while revenue was up 50 percent when compared with June 2003, the last full pre-Baby Bullet year.

In 2000, San Francisco and Peninsula residents complained loudly about dot.com-related traffic jams that took them hours to navigate and left them frazzled. At my request, the State of California appropriated \$127 million to create the first significant improvements to the Caltrain system in 50 years. By installing passing tracks, new signals and sleek new trains, travel time plummeted—up to one-third less time between San Francisco and San Jose. Real bullet trains generally travel at 200 miles or more, so Caltrain couldn't call these improvements bullet trains. The agency settled on "Baby Bullets" to convey the message that service was faster, albeit not at lightening speeds. The message was a hit, as was the service. At 35,000 average weekday riders (up from 27,000 in 2003), Caltrain is taking about 17,000 automobiles daily off the clogged Highway 101/280 commute corridor. Even if you don't ride Caltrain, you win through Baby Bullet.

Baby Bullet was successful because it was implemented quickly – about four years from funding to the commencement of service. It's also successful because it uses existing technology and – from an engineering standpoint—easily implemented changes to deliver reliable service that draws new riders.

The next steps for Caltrain will be funded through local, state and federal sources and will likely bring electrification of the line (to reduce air pollution and further reduce travel times) and safety and station upgrades. Baby Bullet is such a success that several train stations along its route now need more parking! Whether you take Caltrain to work or to the ballpark or just for fun, it's a service that continues to meet the growing and changing needs of San Francisco, the Peninsula, and Santa Clara counties.

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The 8<sup>th</sup> Senate District includes the cities of San Francisco, Brisbane, Daly City, Colma, South San Francisco, San Bruno, Pacifica, Millbrae, Burlingame, Hillsborough, San Mateo, Foster City, Belmont, Woodside, Portola Valley, Half Moon Bay, the communities of Broadmoor, Montara, Moss Beach, and the Farallon Islands.